

1997

Religion, Literature & the Arts

A Grain of Eternity



*Australian Catholic University, Mackillop Campus
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney
2nd-6th January, 1997*

Australian International Conference Proceedings

edited by Michael Griffith and James Tulip

Centre for Studies in Religion, Literature and the Arts
Australian Catholic University

A Grain of Eternity

1997 Australian International
Religion, Literature and the Arts
Conference Proceedings

Selected keynote addresses and papers

Sponsored by

*School of Studies in Religion, University of Sydney
Department of Literature & Languages, Australian Catholic University
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney*

The financial assistance of the Literature Board, Australia Council, for assistance to writers taking part in the conference is gratefully acknowledged



Published by the Centre for Studies in Religion, Literature and the Arts
Printed in Sydney by Berget Pty Ltd
ISBN No. 0-949233-23-4



Chap. I

Of the Sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through
Eternal Death! and of the awaking to Eternal Life

This throne calls me in sleep night after night, & every morn.
Awakes me at sun-rise, then I see the Saviour over me,
Spreading his beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild song.

Awake; awake O sleeper of the land of shadows, wake; expand!
I am in you and you in me, midst in fire diving;
Fibres of love from man to man thro Albion's peasant land
In all the dark Atlantic vale down from the hills of Surrey
A black water accumulates, return Albion; return!
Thy brethren call thee, and thy fathers, and thy sons,
Thy sisters and thy mothers, thy sisters and thy daughters
Weep at thy soul's disease, and the Divine Vision is darkend;
Thy Emanation that was wont to play before the face,
Beaming forth with her daughters into the Divine bosom,
Where hast thou hidden, thy Emanation lovely Jerusalem,
From the vision and fruition of the Holy-one?
I am not a God afar off; I am a brother and friend;
Within your bosoms I reside, and you reside in me;
Lo! we are One; forgiving all Evil; Not seeking recompense,
Ye are my members O ye sleepers at Beulah, land of shades!

But the perturbed Man awry turns down the valleys dark;

Phantom of the over heated brain; shadow of immortality;
Seeking to keep my soul a victim to thy Love, which binds
Man the enemy of man into deceitful friendships;
Jerusalem is not! her daughters are indefinite;
By demonstration, man alone can live, and not by faith.
My mountains are my own, and I will keep them to myself;
The Malvern and the Cheviot, the World's Parliament & Snowden
Are mine, here will I build my Laws of Moral Virtues;
Humanity shall be no more; but war & princedom & victory

So spake Albion in jealous fears, hiding his Emanation
Upon the Thames and Medway, rivers at Beulah; dissembling
His jealousy before the throne divine, darkening, cold;

PREFACE

The fourth International Conference on Religion, Literature and the Arts was held in Sydney, Australia, on January 2-6, 1997. The Conference was sponsored by Australian Catholic University, the Museum of Contemporary Art and the School of Studies in Religion at the University of Sydney.

The Conference brought together scholars and practitioners in literature, history, music, visual arts, film, philosophy, religion studies and theology. A major concern was to highlight the role of the practising artist through forums on the Australian artistic experience, and to visit the outstanding exhibition of paintings and other art works, 'The Spirit of Place', then showing at the Museum of Contemporary Art. The Conference was particularly indebted to the MCA for its interest and support.

The theoretical and practical interests came into brilliant focus with a public performance of 'A Grain of Eternity: William Blake in Australia', a project arising from academic research at Australian Catholic University and the University of Sydney and developed in multimedia presentation by actors, singers, dancers, musicians and filmmakers under the direction of Jane Ahlquist. Blake's prophetic poems and images found a new and striking significance in being absorbed into the Australian artistic consciousness.

The papers of the Conference here published are a selection from some eighty presentations. The Centre for Studies in Religion, Literature and the Arts is particularly indebted to Dr Mårk Byrne for his assistance in preparing the Proceedings for publication.

THE CENTRE FOR STUDIES IN RELIGION, LITERATURE AND THE ARTS & THE RLA SOCIETY

The publication of these Proceedings coincides with two new important RLA developments. In March 1998 the Senate of Australian Catholic University gave formal approval to the establishment of a Centre for Studies in Religion, Literature and the Arts. The Centre is to be located at Mount Saint Mary Campus, Sydney, under the direction of Associate Professor Michael Griffith. It is intended to serve as a focus for the research and teaching activities of Australian Catholic University in the multi-disciplinary fields of religion, literature and the arts, especially where the fields of study and disciplines involved interact.

The Centre will promote activities and close links with practising artists, and look for ways to support creative work in this field. The RLA Centre believes in the deep and powerful affinities between religious and artistic traditions, and recognises in Australian artists, writers and musicians many of the most gifted spiritual and prophetic figures in Australian cultural history.

The Centre will develop a network of relationships with the several campuses of Australian Catholic University together with other tertiary educational institutions around Australia and New Zealand. Links with similar bodies in the UK and USA will be maintained. The RLA Web site can be found at <http://www.acu.edu.au/rla>.

At the 1998 May Conference an Australasian Society for Studies in Religion, Literature and the Arts will be established. The plan is to set up an academic society for individual members in all tertiary and other institutions. It is proposed that the 1999 Conference will be held in Brisbane in association with some outstanding gallery exhibitions. Members joining the Society will benefit from receiving the Proceedings and Newsletter together with special rates at conferences and access to the facilities and resources of the new Centre.

Information about the Centre and the Society can be obtained from A/Prof Michael Griffith, Australian Catholic University, Mount Saint Mary Campus, 179 Albert Road, Strathfield, 2135, NSW. Phone 61 2 97392192, Fax 61 2 97392263, email M.griffith@mary.acu.edu.au

'A GRAIN OF ETERNITY: WILLIAM BLAKE IN AUSTRALIA'

One of the happiest of creative outcomes at the 1997 RLA Conference was the collaboration of Jane Ahlquist and Michael Griffith on the subject of William Blake's impact and influence on Australian artists, musicians and writers over the past two centuries. It began as a piece of academic research by Michael Griffith but developed into a multi-disciplinary and creative artistic project under the direction of Jane Ahlquist, a theatre producer and artist.

Nigel Butterly assembled and played Blake songs set to music by Margaret Sutherland, Mark Grandison, Alan Tregaskis and himself. David Hamilton, tenor and Christopher Allen, baritone were the singers. An archival tape of Lauris Elms of Alan Tregaskis Blake songs was also used at the Conference.

1997 CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

The multimedia presentation involved the actors Ronald Falk and Linden Wilkinson, dancer Janice Claxton, and flautist Christine Draeger. The stage designer was Michael Day with lighting by Jan Primrose.

The production took place in the Amex Theatre of the Museum of Contemporary Art on Saturday, January 4, 1997.

The Australian connection with William Blake has a focus in the National Gallery of Victoria's world famous collection of Blake Prints and Illustrated Texts. A recent study of the visitors' book at the Gallery confirms the wide use of the Blake material by Australian writers and artists, both past and present.

CONTENTS

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVES ON THE SACRED

KEYNOTE ADDRESSES

Karen Armstrong , UK author & broadcaster Jerusalem	1
Ihab Hassan , University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee The Expense of Spirit in Postmodern Times: Between Nihilism and Belief	12
William Johnson , Sophia University, Tokyo Mysticism East and West	
1. The New Mysticism	32
2. Shusaku Endo and the Quest for an Asian, Contemplative Christianity	41

ON ARTISTS AND ARCHITECTS

Daniel Bray , University of Sydney Hammer in the North: Mjöllnor in Medieval Scandinavia	47
Carole Cusack , University of Sydney What's a Nice God like You Doing in a Place like This?	54
Lucy Ellem , La Trobe University Freemasonry & Symbolism: The Art of Gustav Moreau	62
John Fisher , Australian Catholic University Michael, Monasticism, Mysticism: A 13th Century Italian Painted Panel of St Michael the Archangel	70
Elizabeth Fletcher , University of Sydney 'Thorncrown' Chapel in Arkansas: Nature-worship & Christianity - Uneasy Bedfellows	78
Patrick Morgan , Monash University The Religion & Culture of the Ruthenians	85

- Carolyn Muir**, University of Hong Kong
The Mystic Marriage in Christian Art 91

ON THEOLOGIANS AND THEORISTS

- Damien Casey**, University of Sydney
Philosophy & the Advent of a New Epiphany 99

- Chris Harris**, Australian Catholic University
The Pope's Rhinoceros 107

- Joan Kirkby**, Macquarie University
Julia Kristeva's Celebration of the Inner Life 115

- Carl Hooper**
Sounding Out One Hand:
The Zen *Koan* as Literary Form and Site of Realisation 122

ON WRITERS

- Charlotte Clutterbuck**, University of Sydney
Anguish & Christian Poetry 129

- Matthew del Nevo**, University of Sydney
Theologians of the Poetic Imagination:
Rainer Maria Rilke and Wallace Stevens 137

- Ron Shapiro**, University of WA
The Fictionalisation of the Holocaust 144

THE AUSTRALIAN EXPERIENCE OF THE SACRED

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

- David Tacey**, La Trobe University
Australians and the Future of Spirituality 152

WRITERS SPEAK

- Marion Halligan** (novelist), Literature Board, Australia Council
Pelicans & Persian Carpets 169

- Dorothy Porter** (poet), Literature Board, Australia Council
The Postmodernist Writing of *The Monkey's Mask* 176

- Noel Rowe** (poet and critic), University of Sydney
Landing the Sacred 179

- Terry Whitebeach** (poet and novelist), IAD, Alice Springs
Grace Notes 189

ON ARTISTS

- Michael Denholm**, Australian Defence Force Academy
Writing Histories of Australian Art Criticism:
The Sacred in Art in the Late Twentieth Century 198

- Dawne Douglas**, The ArtScience Interface
Cry my Sister, Cry the Earth: Art as Prayer 205

- Heather Johnson**, University of Sydney
Spirituality & Immorality in Early Sydney Modernism 213

- Jane Magon**, Sunshine Coast University College
Spirituality in Contemporary Australian Art 222

ON FILMMAKERS

- Jan Epstein**
Jews & Films in Australia 229
- Peter Malone**
Religion & Australian Film 236
- Sylvia McCosker**
The Word in the Pictures: Five Films by Peter Weir 240

ON MUSICIANS AND POETS

- Michael Griffith**, Australian Catholic University
Golden Builders: William Blake's Impact on Vincent Buckley (Poet)
and George Tibbits (Composer) 251
- Collette Rayment**, Australian Catholic University
Peter Steele's Musings 'in the Spirit of the *[Spiritual] Exercises*' 261

ON NOVELISTS

- Mark Byrne**, University of Sydney
The Emptiness Within 269
- Greg Clarke**
The Ends of the Earth: Defining an Australian Sense of an Ending 276
- Roderic Lacey**, Australian Catholic University
Ways of Being Australian 283
- Elaine Lindsay**, University of Sydney
Holy Feasting: Food in the Secular Writings of Marion Halligan 292
- John Murray**, Australian Catholic University
Accepting the Shadow: Personal & National Reconciliation in
An Imaginary Life & Remembering Babylon 302
- James Tulip**, Australian Catholic University
Religion as Discourse: David Malouf's *Conversations at Curlew Creek* 311

ILLUSTRATIONS

William Blake's <i>Jerusalem</i> : first plate of Chapter one (see page 253)	frontispiece
Coppo di Marcovaldo, San Michele Archangelo	page 77
Thorncrown Chapel, Arkansas	page 84

